GENDER, GUNS AND LEGISLATING: AN ANALYSIS OF STATE LEGISLATIVE POLICY PREFERENCES*

Abstract

Extant research suggests that gender affects the kinds of policies pursued by state legislators, particularly on "women's issues". To date, however, few studies have examined whether gender affects state legislative policy preferences on other issues. One such issue is gun control. This paper uses 2000 National Political Awareness Test (NPAT) data to examine whether gender affects the policy preferences of state legislators regarding gun control. Results suggest that, net of party, region, marital and parental status, and education, gender affects the policy preferences of state legislators on gun control issues. Specifically, regardless of party, female legislators indicate greater support for gun control policies than their male counterparts. Supplementary analyses also suggest that gender differences manifest themselves in roll call votes on recent concealed weapons legislation in four selected states, but only for Democrats.

Key words: gender, state legislators, gun control, attitudes

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Abstract

Extant research suggests that gender affects the policy preferences of state legislators, particularly on "women's issues". Fewer studies, however, have examined whether gender affects state legislators' policy preferences on other issues such as gun control. The current study uses 2000 National Political Awareness Test (NPAT) data to examine whether gender affects the preferences of state legislators regarding gun control policies. Results suggest that net of individual and constituency characteristics, female legislators are more likely to indicate support for gun control policies than their male counterparts.

**GENDER, GUNS, AND LEGISLATING: AN ANALYSIS OF
STATE LEGISLATIVE POLICY PREFERENCES**

For those interested in studying the effects of gender on politics, state legislatures represent fertile research ground (Thomas 2003). According to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP 2006), the percentage of women in state legislatures has increased 400% since 1971. In 2006, women held 23% of all state legislative seats, but female representation varied tremendously, from 8% in South Carolina to 36% in Maryland. Studies generally have found that women legislators have distinct policy preferences, particularly on issues of traditional concern to women such as health care and children's issues (Swers 2001; Thomas 1994, 2003). More research is needed, however, to "investigate the ways in which female legislators incorporate women's interests into the policy discussion on issues that are not obviously women's issues (Swers 2001:178). One such issue is gun control.[1] Surveys typically show that women are more likely to favor gun control (e.g. Hurwitz and Smithey 1998; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Smith 1984). In this paper, we explore whether there are also gender differences in policy preferences among state legislators on gun control issues.[2] Such research is timely because state legislative activity on firearm legislation has been vigorous in recent years (see US Department of Justice 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003).

GENDER INFLUENCES ON LEGISLATORS

As noted, research suggests that women legislators as a group have distinct concerns about "women's issues" such as health, education, and welfare (see Swers 2001 and Thomas 1994, 2003

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[1] Although some have attempted in recent years to portray gun rights/control as a "women's issue", it is clearly not an issue that has been considered to be one in mainstream gender and politics research, given its nearly complete absence from the discussions the we were able to locate on "women's issues". We think these recent attempts to portray gun rights/control as "women's issues" only enhance the need for research on the topic.

[2] We chose to examine legislators' policy preferences here because legislative behavior such as roll call voting is more likely to be influenced by strategic concerns such as constituency preferences (see Poggione, 2004:305 for a discussion).

for overviews).[3] For example, Poggione (2004), in a recent mail survey of 530 state legislators in 24 states, found that gender influenced the likelihood of support for a variety of welfare policies, even controlling for constituency influences.   The rationale for such gender differences is that women are expected to bring a different perspective than men based on their distinct experiences and traditional roles in the private sphere (Thomas 1994). Therefore, women are thought to be more concerned with these issues because they see themselves as representing women as a distinct group. Consistent with this, Caiazza (2004:37) notes that "most recent research finds that gender-based dynamics usually trump other variables [such as partisanship and ideology] in explaining support for women's issues."

Although research has documented gender differences in preferences among state legislators across a number of "women's issue" policies, no research that we are aware of has examined the influence of gender on legislators' preferences on gun control. The gender literature might lead one to expect that gender differences would manifest themselves across a variety of issues because of a "unique female perspective". For example, Kathlene (1995), in a study of Colorado state legislators during the 1989 session, found that female legislators tended to view criminals as a product of their circumstances, whereas male legislators tended to focus on individual responsibility. These gender differences in conceptualization of criminals led to different policy solutions. For instance, only female legislators proposed crime prevention measures or victims' rights bills.

Yet, the possibility exists that there may be no gender differences among state legislators, net of other variables such as party and constituency preferences, because women may not see this as an issue that particularly pertains to them "as women". Studies have consistently shown that men are more likely to own guns than women (see Sheley, Brody, and, Wright 1994; Smith, and Smith 1995;

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[3] We limit our discussion primarily to legislators' policy preferences rather than priorities for two reasons. First, it is unlikely that women will have differences in policy priorities if they do not have differences in policy preferences on gun control. Therefore, we see the issue of policy preferences as somewhat of a preliminary question. The second reason is because we have no way of examining the priorities of the legislators with the current data.

Pastore and Maguire 2003, Table 2.61). Thus, men are more likely to have a personal stake in opposing limitations on their perceived second amendment right to bear arms.

A third possibility exists. It could be that gender differences among state legislators on gun control issues depend on the way they frame the issue. For example, Goss (2003) argues that women's attitudes and behavior regarding gun control depend on whether they see it as a crime control issue or a child safety issue. Studying female participation in the "Million Mom March", Goss (2003) finds that women who saw gun control as a child safety issue were more likely to participate and participate more fully than those who saw it as a crime control issue. Framing gun control as a child safety issue could trigger the "maternal" role, moving this issue into a woman's "legitimate political domain (Goss 2003:110)". From this perspective, one might expect that the likelihood of women legislators' supporting gun control policies could depend on how they frame the issue. Although we do not have direct evidence on issue framing by state legislators in the current study, we do examine this issue indirectly.

The goal of this study is to explore whether gender differences exist among state legislators on policies outside of the traditional domain of women's issues such as gun control, net of other factors. In the next section, we discuss the data and methods used to address these questions in the current study.

DATA AND METHODS

To assess gender differences in policy preferences of state legislators on gun control issues, we used data made available through the website of Project Vote Smart (www.vote-smart.org), a non-profit organization that conducts annual surveys of federal and state legislators called The National Political Awareness Test (NPAT). We examine questions relating to gun control that were uniformly asked across all states. At the time of data collection, the 2000 survey was the most recent available. Because the salience of particular issues might vary over time, we chose not to combine years. We also limited the sample to sitting legislators because the incentives for incumbents and

challengers to respond to questions might be very different. For example, challengers might be more inclined to stake out extreme positions in an effort to distinguish themselves from incumbents. The resulting dataset contained 664 observations (177 female and 487 male state legislators) representing 37 states.[4]

The sample represents approximately 10% of then-current state legislators.[5] Therefore, the results discussed below should only be considered an accurate reflection of those legislators in the sample. Generalization beyond those in the sample should be done with a considerable degree of caution. There are two reasons to believe that the sample is worthwhile to study, however. First, it is reasonably statistically representative of gender, party, age, and marital status breakdowns in the population of state legislators at the time of the survey. For example, the sample includes about 49% Democrats compared to about 49.5% of state legislators nationwide being Democrats in 2001 (CAWP 2001). Nationwide about 22% of state legislators were women, compared to about 27% in the sample. In addition, the age breakdowns of state legislators in the sample were relatively comparable to that of the population of state legislators. For women, 19% of the sample was under age 50 compared to 24% of state legislators in 2001 (CAWP 2001). For men, the percentage of the sample under age 50 was identical (39%) to that of the population of state legislators in 2001. Likewise, the gender pattern of marital status of legislators in the sample roughly mirrors that of the population of legislators in 2001 (CAWP 2001). Approximately 67% of female legislators in the sample were married compared to 69% of all female state legislators in 2001. For men,

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[4] Because the sample was not randomly drawn, there was some variation across states in number of respondents. To test whether this influenced results, we identified states that were over-represented in the sample. Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire accounted for approximately 30% of the sample (which may be due to their large state legislatures), but elimination of these states individually and collectively did not change the substantive interpretations of the gender and party effects discussed below.
[5] As one reviewer noted, part of the low response rates for the survey may be due to the fact that some state and national party officials have recently recommended that candidates avoid answering the survey for fear of opponents using responses against them. While this is a general limitation of the sample, it will not affect the gender differences examined in the current study unless willingness to respond to the survey differs by gender.

approximately 81% of respondents were married compared to 87% of all state legislators in 2001. Therefore, the NPAT sample roughly mirrors the population of state legislators on a number of characteristics that might influence gun control preferences. A second reason to have some confidence in the data is that the survey was not specific to gun control. The NPAT survey asked questions about a wide array of issues that state legislatures might consider. Therefore, there is no *a priori* reason to believe that the legislators choosing to respond would be particularly extreme in their gun control stances.

Dependent Variables

The NPAT asks the respondent to indicate which principles from a list they support (if any) concerning gun issues. Thus, the NPAT measures whether a politician indicates support for policy initiatives. This survey format means that we cannot assume that failure to check a particular issue box indicates *opposition* to a particular issue. As a consequence, our ability to distinguish the strength of support for particular initiatives is limited. Still, we believe it is reasonable to assume that indicating support for an initiative shows greater support than failure to check the box.[6] Separate analyses were conducted regarding the influence of gender (net of other factors discussed below) on the likelihood of indicating support for six principles. *Ban* refers to whether the respondent would support banning the sale or transfer of semi-automatic guns, except those used for hunting. *License* refers to whether the respondent would support requiring licenses for possessing guns. *Checks* refers to whether the respondent would support requiring background checks on gun sales between private citizens at gun shows. *Child lock* refers to whether the respondent would support requiring gun manufacturers to provide child-safety locks on guns. *Enforce* refers to whether the respondent indicates support for maintaining and strengthening the enforcement of existing state restrictions on

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[6] We were also unable to distinguish differences in issue salience across states. It is reasonable to assume that particular issues would be more salient for legislators in states where they are currently under consideration and this might confound the results shown here. Future research should consider whether

the purchase and possession of guns. Finally, *conceal* refers to whether the respondent supports the state's current policy on carrying concealed weapons (CCW).[7]

Although checking that one supports the principles listed for the first four issues (locks, ban, license, and checks) relatively unambiguously suggests support for gun control, the implications of indicating support for the remaining issues are less clear. Identifying support for enforcing and strengthening existing state laws may or may not be a gun control stance depending on the degree to which the respondent perceives the current state laws as being strict or lax in controlling firearms. Similarly, supporting current state policy on concealed carry would indicate support for gun control in states that do not permit concealed weapons but would mean something entirely different in states that issue CCW permits to most who apply for them. Legislators in the current study appear to see maintaining and *strengthening* enforcement of existing firearms laws as a gun control stance because those who indicated support for the other gun control principles tended to also indicate support for enforcement of existing laws. The opposite is true with respect to supporting current state CCW laws. Those who indicated support for this principle were less likely to indicate support for the other principles. Therefore, we interpret indicating support for maintaining and strengthening state laws and failure to indicate support for current state CCW policies as gun control stances.[8]

Independent Variables

Of course, to isolate the effects of gender on gun control preferences, one must consider alternative explanations. Political party is one reasonable alternative explanation for gun control preferences. Citizen polls show that support for gun control measures varies by party. For example,

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differential issue salience across states influences gender differences in attitudes on gun control. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

[7] The NPAT also asked whether respondents would support easing or repealing restrictions on gun sales. Because these policies were supported by very few legislators in the sample, maximum likelihood solutions were unreliable and were therefore excluded from the analyses reported below.

[8] Although there tended to be considerable overlap in legislators' responses to gun issues, there were some differences across gun issues. These differences provide some relevant information in the discussion of framing. Therefore, we analyze legislators' responses separately.

Pastore and Maguire (2003, Table 2.64) note that in one poll 71% of Democrats favored stricter gun laws compared to only 40% of Republicans. Yet, in multivariate analyses, the relationship between party and gun control preferences is less clear (cf. Hurwitz and Smithey 1998; Wolpert and Gimpel 1998). Despite this conflicting evidence, party identification seems likely to influence state legislators' policy preferences on gun issues. Therefore, we include a categorical variable, *Republican,* coded 0 for Democrats and 1 for Republicans.[9] Citizen surveys also suggest that support for gun control policies varies by education level (e.g. Pastore and Maguire 2003, Table 2.64). Yet, in multivariate analyses, the relationship between education and support for gun control is less clear (cf. Kahan and Braman 2003; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001). To control for the effects of education, we include a categorical variable, *college*, coded 1 for those with bachelor's degrees or post-graduate degrees, and 0 otherwise. Polls also traditionally show that those living in Southern states express the least support for gun control (Pastore and Maguire 2003, Table 2.66). To control for potential regional differences in gun control attitudes, we include a categorical variable, *South,* coded 1 for legislators from southern states (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, VA, TN, TX), and 0 for all others. Some previous research has also found that support for gun control is highest among those 50 and older (e.g. Pastore and Maguire 2003, Table 2.64; Wolpert and Gimpel 1998). To control for the effects of age on gun control attitudes, we include a continuous variable reflecting the respondent's *age* in years. As noted above, Goss's (2003) study focused on whether *mothers* framed gun control as a child safety issue. It seems reasonable that both women *and men* legislators with children may be more likely to view gun control as a child safety issue and consequently be more likely to favor gun control. Thus, we include a categorical variable *parent,*

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[9] We treat the 8 legislators identifying themselves as Independents as Democrats in the current analyses but excluding them or treating them as Republicans produces identical results to those reported below. Similarly, we treat the 17 legislators from Nebraska (a non-partisan state) as Democrats in the analyses reported below. The results are identical to those reported below when Nebraskan legislators are excluded or treated as Republicans, however.

coded 1 for those with children and 0 for those with no children.[10] Another demographic factor that may influence gun control attitudes is marital status. Smith and Smith (1995) note that, in recent years, gun rights groups have gone to some lengths to portray gun ownership as a means of protection for women. Therefore, it could be that unattached women legislators, might be more likely to oppose gun control because they see guns as a means of protection. Therefore, in the analyses reported below, *married* is coded 1 for married respondents and 0 for all others.

Legislators' expressed gun control preferences also could represent strategic attempts to garner votes by reflecting the preferences of their constituencies. If true, savvy politicians' responses to the NPAT might simply reflect the attitudes they believe their constituents wish them to express. Thus, women legislators may appear to be more liberal because the constituencies likely to elect women are more liberal (Burrell 1996). Indeed, studies have shown that some of the observed gender effects on state legislative outcomes may be due to constituency preferences (see Poggione 2004:305 for a discussion). To control for this possibility, we collected information on several characteristics of the districts that state legislators represented that might influence gun control policy preferences.[11] This information was drawn from Barone, Lilley, and DeFranco (1998). *Percent Republican* refers to the percentage of state lower house elections in which the district was carried by a Republican from 1992 through 1996. This variable ranged from 0 for districts in which all state legislative elections during the period were won by Democrats to 100 when all elections were won by Republicans, and is assumed to be a reasonable proxy for the party leanings of the district across recent elections. We also included the percent of residents in the district with a college degree to control for the potential effects of education, and the percent of the district that was urban, because

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[10] Mean substitution was employed for missing values on legislator age, education, and parental status. Excluding missing cases on these variables did not alter the substantive interpretations of the variables in the analyses discussed below, however.

[11] One might also consider controlling for crime rates in a district because crime rates might influence support for gun control. Unfortunately, police agency boundaries and district boundaries do not match up well enough to produce meaningful district-level estimates.

urban districts where gun violence is more common are expected to be more likely to favor gun control.[12] Finally, to control for the possibility that the likelihood of indicating support for gun control was related to the gender balance of the legislature, we included the percent of the state legislature that was women in 2000.[13]

Statistical Model

The dependent variables described above are binary because respondents either indicated support for a particular gun issue principle or they did not. Therefore, logistic regression techniques are more appropriate than ordinary least squares regression (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1989). Logistic regression relies on the logit transformation of the dependent variable, which is the natural log of the probability that a response will be chosen divided by one minus the probability that a response will be chosen (ln [p/ 1-p]). Thus, independent variables predict the log-odds that a legislator will indicate support for the particular gun issue. Because the log-odds are not intuitively meaningful to many people, our discussion below will mainly refer to probabilities, which Menard (1995:13) notes is simply another way of expressing the same thing. Because the sample includes more than one legislator from each state, errors cannot be assumed to be independent. Therefore, we use panel corrected standard errors in the results reported below.[14]

RESULTS

Prior to considering regression results, it is instructive to examine the relationships between gender, party, and gun control support for the legislators in the sample. Table 1 presents the

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[12] We also checked to see if the average household income of the district influenced gun control attitudes of legislators on the assumption that richer districts would be more conservative on average and therefore less likely to favor gun control. However, because income and education are highly correlated, only one could be entered in the model at a time. The substantive findings for individual gender and party characteristics are unchanged regardless of whether district household income or education is included in the models.

[13] Another way of controlling for unmeasured elements of state context such as the professionalism of the legislature would be to include dummy variables for each state. Alternative analyses that included state dummies produced substantively similar results.

[14] This was accomplished using the repeated statement in SAS's Proc Genmod.

percentages of respondents indicating support for six issues in the NPAT survey discussed above, broken down by legislator party and gender. T-tests assessed whether statistically significant gender differences existed within party. Table 1 suggests that, within party, women legislators are more likely to indicate support for gun control. In all instances, female legislators in the sample indicated support for gun issue principles more frequently (less for CCW laws) than their male counterparts within their own party. These differences were statistically significant (p < .05, two-tailed test) in five of six cases for Democrats, and four of six cases for Republicans. Even where differences were not statistically significant, there were six to twelve percent differences between men and women within party. In the next section we turn to multivariate tests of the hypothesis that gender affects state legislators' support for gun control, net of other potential explanations.

Insert Table 1 about here

Logistic Regression Results

Table 2 presents the results of six logistic regression analyses, using each of the separate gun policies discussed above as a dependent variable. To assess overall model fit, one can use a likelihood ratio test, which is computed as twice the difference between the log-likelihoods of the models being compared. This value is then compared to the χ^2 distribution, where the degrees of freedom equal the difference between the number of parameters in the two models (Osgood and Chambers, 2000). In this case, each model in Table 2 is being compared to a model with only an intercept. The large differences in log likelihoods in all six equations suggest that the models fit significantly (p <.001) better than models with only an intercept.

Insert Table 2 here

The results shown in Table 2 confirm that gender plays a key role in defining legislative preferences for gun policies. Other than political party, gender was the most consistent predictor of the log-odds of indicating support for gun control. In five of six cases, the log-odds (probability) of

indicating support for gun control principles were significantly higher (p <.05) for female legislators (lower for CCW), net of other individual and constituency factors. Surprisingly, the only case for which gender was not a significant predictor of the likelihood of indicating support for a gun issue was child locks.

As we noted above, Goss (2003) found that women were more likely to engage in the "Million Mom March" if they framed the issue terms of child safety. Although we do not have direct measures of the way legislators framed issues when considering whether they support a particular gun issue principle, we can address this indirectly by examining whether the legislators had children. To test this possibility, we included a categorical variable for whether the legislator was a parent. It was not a significant predictor of the probability of indicating support for gun control in any of the six models. We also introduced an interaction term between legislator gender and parental status. This term was not statistically significant for any of the gun issues considered here. Thus, it does not appear that the likelihood of indicating support for gun control depends on whether the female legislator is a mother. Nor does it appear that marital status independently influenced the likelihood of indicating support for gun control. Similar results were found for a gender by marital status interaction term. We also considered the possibility that legislator party and gender might interact. No statistically significant gender by party interaction terms were found for any of the gun issues considered here. Thus, the impact of gender on gun issue policy preferences among legislators apparently is not mediated by any of the other variables tested.

We also considered the possibility that a legislator's party identification would influence their attitudes on gun control. In all cases, the probabilities of indicating support for gun issue principles were significantly lower for Republican legislators (higher for CCW). To get a sense of the practical magnitude of these gender and partisan differences, one can use the log-odds coefficients from Table 2 to calculate the predicted probability that a male or female legislator of either party would indicate support for a particular gun issue ($p = e^{b1+b2} / 1 + e^{b1+b2}$). Figure 1 shows the predicted probabilities

of legislators indicating support for gun control by gender and party. All else being equal, the probabilities that women Democratic legislators in the sample would indicate support for gun control policies ranged from about .67 to.74 (.36 for CCW). For women Republicans the probabilities ranged from .32 to .54 (.67 for CCW). For male Republicans the probabilities of indicating support for the policies ranged from .14 to .3 (.78 for CCW).[15]

Insert Figure 1 here

In addition, in 4 of 6 cases, the percentage of 1992-1996 state lower house elections that went Republican in the district is also significantly related to the probability that a legislator will indicate support for gun control initiatives. Thus, at both the individual and district-levels, party appears to exert a strong influence on the likelihood of state legislators in the survey indicating support for gun control.

The existing literature on the demographics of gun control policy preferences discussed above led us to include a number of other variables that could account for potential differences among state legislators responding to the NPAT survey. Consistent with our expectations, age is a significant predictor of the probability that legislators would indicate support for 4 of the 6 gun issues. On the other hand, there is mixed support for the effect of education in the current study. At the individual level, legislators' having a bachelor's degree or higher only were related to statistically higher probabilities of supporting gun control in two of six models. At the district level, however, in all six equations the probability of a state legislator indicating support for gun control principles increased (decreased for CCW) as the percent of the district having college degrees increased. Finally, at the individual level, region was not significantly related to the probability that a state legislator would indicate support for gun control policies (except for CCW laws), and in all models

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[15] Because male Democrats are coded as 0s on both party and gender their predicted probabilities in all cases equal .5 (since $e^0 = 1$, so $p = 1 / 1+1$).

the district percent urban was unrelated to the probability of legislators indicating support for gun control.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The current study explored gender differences in state legislators' preferences regarding gun control. The results discussed above show that for the sample of state legislators responding to the 2000 NPAT survey, gender is a consistent predictor of preferences for gun control, even controlling for partisan identification, and a number of other relevant individual and constituency-level influences. Women state legislators of both parties were more likely than their male counterparts to indicate support for banning guns altogether, requiring licenses or background checks, and maintaining and strengthening the enforcement of existing firearms laws; and less likely to support current state CCW laws. The only gun issue where gender differences were not significant was child safety locks. Women legislators were no more or less likely to indicate support for child safety locks than their male counterparts. Similarly, parental status was essentially unrelated to the likelihood that legislators responding to the NPAT survey would indicate support for gun control, including child safety locks.

This pattern of results is very surprising in light of previous research on gender. Prior studies would have led us to believe that women would either support child locks as a group because they should be expected to be more concerned with "women's issues" such as child safety. Or, we might have expected that having children would make the issue of child safety more important, and therefore child locks should be more likely to be supported by women legislators that were parents. In fact, we found neither to be the case. Such findings present a challenge to the notion that women can be expected to be uniformly liberal across issues whether seen as a traditional women's issue or not. These results suggest that attention to the specifics of issues is important. It is true that women legislators as a group were more likely to support gun control but this finding was not universal

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across gun policies and gender differences were absent where they would be most expected- child safety locks.

Although the results we presented above were consistent with our argument that gender would affect gun control attitudes of state legislators, there are a number of important caveats. First, the small sample size means that the data may not be representative of state legislators as a whole. However, because the sample generally approximates the demographic characteristics of the population of state legislators, and because the NPAT survey addresses a wide variety of policy issues, we argue the results can shed light on the influence of gender on legislators' attitudes. Still, generalizations beyond legislators in the survey should be made with considerable caution and research using a more representative sample should attempt to replicate these findings.

The structure of the NPAT survey also made nuanced examination of the strength of legislators' attitudes impossible. The survey only tells whether the respondent indicates support for the particular principle or not. Therefore we cannot distinguish strong support from weak support or assume that failure to check a particular box means that a legislator opposes a particular principle. Yet, we believe it is fair to assume that those who check a box can be reasonably assumed to show greater support for a principle than those who do not. So it is reasonable to take the pattern of results shown in Table 2 as an indication that women legislators' are more likely to indicate support for gun control principles than their male counterparts.

As we noted, the results presented here also do not fit with our expectations regarding issue framing. Yet, because the NPAT did not include questions on how legislators framed issues, the current study offers only indirect evidence on this issue. Future research should specifically consider the issue of framing and the impact this has on the relationship between gender and support for gun control. Framing may also vary by party. For example, Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) found that the support for carrying concealed weapons among adults in Kansas varied depending on whether it was framed as a public safety or individual rights issue, and issue frames were more likely to affect

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Republicans and Independents than Democrats. It would be interesting to see if these differential framing effects by party also occurs among state legislators on gun issues.

Although the results in Table 2 show consistent support for the effects of gender on state legislators' expressed policy preferences, it is reasonable to inquire as to whether these gender differences in policy preferences translate to differences in policy priorities (impossible to assess with the current data). Future research should examine whether the gender differences in gun control preferences found in the current study also manifest themselves in legislative behavior such as bill sponsorship.

Despite these limitations, we believe the current study points to the importance of examining how gender affects legislators' attitudes and behavior outside of policy arenas traditionally identified as "women's issues". This is particularly relevant in the area of gun control because of recent efforts on the part of both gun control and gun rights groups to frame their arguments in ways designed to tap into women's concerns. It is also relevant given that there is still substantial room for growth in the percentage of women in state legislatures. Even in the most egalitarian states less than 40% of state legislators are women. Over time as women's representation increases, the tenor of gun control debates on the floors of state legislatures may change.

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Table 1. Percentage of State Legislators Indicating Support for Specific Gun Policy Initiatives by Gender and Party in the 2000 NPAT Survey.

Issue	Female (D)	Male (D)	Female (R)	Male (R)
Ban Semi-automatics	60.5*	44.6	22.0*	10.7
Require License	69.3*	47.9	22.0*	8.7
Background Check	85.1*	74.6	47.5*	32.0
Child Safety Locks	78.1	71.8	27.1	18.9
Enforce Existing Laws	86.6*	69.0	66.1*	40.5
Support Concealed Weapons Policy	10.6*	23.9	45.8	57.7

Note: Comparisons within party, *t-value > 2.0.

Table 2. Binary Logistic Regression Results State Legislators' Gun Issue Preferences by Gender (with panel corrected standard errors, N=664).

	Background	License	Child Lock	Maintain	Ban Sale	Conceal
Intercept	-0.0803	-1.8283	-0.9492	-0.1014	-2.7634**	1.0812
	(0.5637)	(0.9730)	(0.8447)	(0.6139)	(0.8706)	(0.8565)
Southern State	0.1451	-0.2473	-0.3829	0.1075	0.1036	0.9899***
	(.5537)	(0.5073)	(0.3597)	(0.3614)	(0.3336)	(0.2730)
Age	0.0084	0.0247**	0.0196**	0.0019	0.0350**	-0.0311*
	(0.0072)	(0.0088)	(0.0067)	(0.0082)	(0.0120)	(0.0127)
Parent	-0.2990	-0.1909	-0.1556	-0.1262	-0.4529	0.1998
	(0.3150)	(0.2812)	(0.3013)	(0.2745)	(0.3394)	(0.3754)
Married	-0.0318	0.0313	-0.1775	-0.2214	-0.1105	0.1027
	(0.1947)	(0.1858)	(0.2649)	(0.3091)	(0.2920)	(0.2705)
College	0.1349	0.3902*	0.2166	0.2651	0.5970**	-0.3692
	(0.1475)	(0.1928)	(0.1542)	(0.1424)	(0.1999)	(0.1980)
Republican	-1.4331***	-1.8122***	-1.7647***	-0.8487***	-1.2659***	1.2767***
	(0.2000)	(0.2604)	(0.3011)	(0.2459)	(0.3356)	(0.3004)
Female	0.7194***	1.0489***	0.3972	1.0212***	0.7783***	-0.5919**
	(0.2146)	(0.2510)	(0.2720)	(0.1608)	(0.2849)	(0.1868)
District %	0.0056*	0.0040	0.0038	0.0009	0.0043	-0.0003
Urban	(0.0022)	(0.0030)	(0.0025)	(0.0030)	(0.0025)	(0.0023)
District %	0.0466***	0.0458***	0.0438***	0.0360***	0.0321***	-0.0411***
College Ed.	(0.007)	(0.0105)	(0.0090)	(0.0092)	(0.0065)	(0.0074)
% Republican	-0.6893**	-0.7017***	-0.9853***	-0.3853	-0.7646**	0.2536
92-96 election	(0.2639)	(0.1756)	(0.2644)	(0.2346)	(0.2814)	(0.2944)
Legislature	-0.0186	-0.0403	-0.0099	-0.0054	-0.0117	0.0171
% Female	(0.0185)	(0.0289)	(0.0257)	(0.0199)	(0.0226)	(0.0225)
-2 LL-Ratio $\chi^{2\,a}$	191.52***	230.8***	242.98***	115.4***	171.28***	146.88***

Note: Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ in two-tailed tests.

[a]-2 Log Likelihood Ratio χ^2 tests the improvement in model fit compared to an intercept only model.

Figure1. Predicted Probabuilities of Supporting Gun Issues By Party and Gender